

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVE

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Co-Chairs

Beverly Wright
Director
Deep South Center for
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Executive Director
Indigenous Environmental Network

Member Organizations

Black Leadership Forum
Church Federation of Greater Indianapolis
The Church of the Brethren
Communities for a Better Environment
CorpWatch
Corporation for Enterprise Development
Council of Athabascan Tribal Government
Deep South Center for Environmental
Justice at Xavier University
Eco Equity
Environmental Justice Resource Center at
Clark Atlanta University
Georgia Coalition for a Peoples' Agenda
Indigenous Environmental Network
Intertribal Council on Utility Policy
Just Transition Alliance
National Black Environmental
Justice Network
Kids Against Pollution
Native Village of Unalakleet
New York PIRG
North Baton Rouge
Environmental Association
Redefining Progress
Southern Organizing Committee
Southwest Network for Economic and
Environmental Justice
Southwest Worker's Union
United Church of Christ Justice and
Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church
West County Toxics Coalition
West Harlem Environmental
Action (WE ACT)

Individual Members

Bunyan Bryant
Professor, School of Natural Resources,
University of Michigan

Redefining Progress is the current host and
fiscal agent for the Environmental Justice
and Climate Change Initiative.

January 31, 2006

Eileen Wenger Tutt, Special Advisor to the Secretary
California Environmental Protection Agency
1001 I Street, P.O. Box 2815
Sacramento, CA 95812-2815
E-mail: etutt@calepa.ca.gov

Re: Comments delivered by Ansje Miller, Director of the Environmental Justice
and Climate Change Initiative on Climate Action Team reports

Dear Climate Action Team,

My name is Ansje Miller and I am the director of the Environmental Justice and
Climate Change Initiative. The EJCC is a coalition of environmental justice, faith-
based, policy and academic organizations representing thousands of communities
around the country, including California. We have come together to push for
policies and train new leaders that protect the most vulnerable from the impacts of
climate change and foster a just transition to a future free from fossil fuels.

Our members are primarily low-income and people of color communities who are
already experiencing climate change as more than just a theory.

Last week, the public policy organization Redefining Progress released a report
called Climate Change in California: Health, Equity and Economic Impacts which
found that California faces an uncertain environmental and economic future.
Immediate reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are imperative to save lives,
jobs and the environment.

This data is quite alarming.

**Climate change poses lifelong threats to life and well-being for the most
vulnerable people in California.** Heat-related deaths and sufferers of respiratory
ailments like asthma will increase. If global warming continues unchecked, nearly
1,200 people could die yearly in Los Angeles from heat-related causes by the end
of the century. To put that number in perspective, such deaths averaged 165
annually during the 1990s.

Higher prices on food and electricity will especially impact low-income people.
Job loss will occur in industries with high percentages of people of color, such as
agriculture and tourism. The increase in extreme weather events, such as heat
waves and flooding, will impact all of California – but particularly low-income
and people of color communities who disproportionately lack access to healthcare,
are often renters without property insurance, and live in substandard housing.

This all leads us to urge you to take steps for **Immediate, deep reductions in
greenhouse gas emissions.**

These reductions should be mandatory and enforceable.

They must also be real – polluters must reduce emissions in California – where residents can benefit the most – not by planting trees in some remote part of the world. Instead, actions like expanding and funding public transit systems at adequate levels could keep thousands of polluting cars off of roads and expand mobility for low-income Californians.

The burden of taking action on climate should be shouldered by those most responsible for the problem, not those who can barely afford to adapt to the changes. Polluters must pay.

Which brings me to the final point, **adaptation assistance must be supplied to those most vulnerable.** For example, health insurance for those who cannot afford it is crucial. Workers in affected industries—such as agriculture and tourism—must have a just transition to employment in other sectors.

The public goods charge could be one way to help with that adaptation assistance and we urge you to keep that in the recommendations with the funds used to provide a just transition for low-income and people of color communities.

The presentations today clearly demonstrated that it makes economic sense to take action on climate change. Scientists predict that we are quickly reaching a point of no return. Please, think about those Californians who are most vulnerable, and take immediate, mandatory action that supports our low-income and people of color communities.

Sincerely,

Ansje Miller
Initiative Director, Environmental Justice and Climate Change Initiative